

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

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September 11, 1979

TO : The Files **DECAPTIONED**

FROM : POL - Townsend B. Friedman

SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS: A Military View

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The source of the following report is a fairly senior member of a major Argentine military intelligence organization. His position brings him in contact with both operational units and with high ranking military officials. Thus, he is knowledgeable about the affairs he comments on. However, because of the compartmentalization and rivalries among security forces, his knowledge of particular operations is restricted. He acknowledges that he talks to me only with the authorization of his superiors. He also states that his superiors give him little orientation on what to say--because he says "nobody in command is giving orientation to anybody". He is careful to distinguish between his own opinions and those of the GOA.

#### Terrorism and Subversion

My source minimized the current real threat against Argentines posed by terrorists. He claims they were eliminated. Their capabilities, he said, were restricted to an occasional clandestine radio broadcast and perhaps "a bomb or two". In any case, he said there was nothing in on objective terms to justify the current siege mentality and activity of the military. He did say that at least one or two of those abducted in August seem to have Montonero connections, promising to let me know at a later date which ones.

#### The Fundamental Problems

My source said that he had little hope for Argentina getting permanently out of its current mess barring some major changes in what he affirmed were three fundamental, and in effect structural, problems:

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a) the police and security forces are untrained in sophisticated investigative practices and think only brutality gets results;

b) the courts are ineffective, corruptible and mediocre. The security forces--like the general public--have no confidence in the rule of law;

c) the military has a grossly simplistic attitude towards Marxism. Anybody who criticizes the government is a Marxist.

There is little or no capacity to distinguish among criticism, subversion, and terrorism. All are lumped together and thought to be part of "international Marxist subversion which threatens the Argentine nation." My source blamed a part of this exaggerated sensitivity to "international Marxism" on received doctrine from the United States imbibed by the military in years of training at American military facilities.

#### A Coming Turn for the Worse?

My source said he feared that things could get "very bad" again regarding human rights violations. He said there are elements in the military just waiting for the departure of the IAHRC to begin another campaign against subversives, terrorists, and critics--i.e. "Marxists" in the military mentality. In part, he attributed these pressures to the narrow view of military men. At least as important, he said, is that some of those most deeply involved in the "dirty war" are terribly frightened that as the climate returns to normality they are being moved closer to the time when they must account for their acts and suffer retribution. On the other hand, if the "dirty war" can be kept going they are protected--and besides, he said; in some cases doing what they like best. My source made it clear that General Suarez Mason is the guardian angel of this group.

#### The US and Human Rights

My source was critical of the US's public diplomacy in favor of human rights. He said our comments only make those involved in the dirty war more afraid that a judgment day is coming for them. Suarez Mason plays upon this--"he is a demagogue among

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the officers." If the USG wanted to do something useful for human rights, he suggested, it would help establish a climate where it would be possible for the GOA to drop a curtain over the past or a curtain that would eliminate the fear that drives the men involved in the dirty war.

Comment: Manipulation may have been behind much of what my source told me. First he established himself as a reasonable man and then he drops the message "we need an amnesty".

I am not inclined to such a cynical view, yet. I think he was accurately giving me his views, based on his perceptions and knowledge.

His view on the effects of USG public diplomacy on the intra-military power struggle closely parallel those I have heard privately from two others. One is a leading human rights activist in Argentina and the other a knowledgeable foreign correspondent who has been observing Argentina for several years and is a critic of the regime. Others in the human rights community are very pleased with our outspokenness.

In effect, my source was talking about the institution of some sort of amnesty for the security forces--a "ley de olvidos." We know that several old-time politicians have discussed the need for a "ley de olvidos" to help open the road for the eventual return to democracy. In addition, [ ] reported that some military men are speaking about a "ley de olvidos" as a condition precedent for the military's withdrawal from power. We suspect that the security forces who look to Suarez Mason might have grave doubts about the durability of such an amnesty once the military surrenders power. B1

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